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ABSTRACT

This paper details the benefits of interdisciplinary studies, with particular focus on the Humanities Enrichment Program at the Community College of Philadelphia. The program uses a team-teaching, linked-course paradigm. Two courses from different disciplines are aligned, and faculty from each discipline teach the linked courses as humanities courses within an interdisciplinary framework. The only requirement for the courses is that the students get above-average reading placement scores, or that they earn a grade of "B" or above in the college composition course. The two faculty members collaborate in the selection of materials, pedagogic techniques, assignment design, and evaluation. Students study a theme or topic by reading primary texts, often from across disciplines. Each instructor shares instructional time equally. The author argues against those who claim interdisciplinary studies do not ground students in the disciplinary ways of thinking by suggesting that lower-division students in general education courses need to strengthen their critical thinking and academic discourse skills more than they need to acquire in-depth disciplinary knowledge. The author provides, as a model, a description of how she taught the Hindu epic "Ramayana" along with Homer's epic "Iliad." Sample study questions and assignments are appended. (Author/NB)

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Interdisciplinary Instruction in the Humanities Enrichment Program: Alignment of Programmatic, Pedagogic and Learner Goals

Lakshmi Gudipati

October 2002

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Interdisciplinary Instruction in the Humanities Enrichment program: Alignment of Programmatic, Pedagogic and Learner Goals

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> While academic studies are often compartmentalized with each discipline occupying a distinct place, humanities courses cut across discipline boundaries to integrate information, ideas, and opinions from a variety of perspectives. Today, the ability to integrate knowledge is a necessary function of cutting-edge developments, whether they are in nuclear medicine, information technology, or the humanities. (Vandermast, P. 2)

Writes a Humanities professor while proclaiming the top 10 reasons to study humanities.

At Community College of Philadelphia, we offer a version of interdisciplinary instruction through our Humanities Enrichment Program, which helps put the pedagogy of interdisciplinarity and problem solving into practice. The college encourages the program because our instructional philosophy appeals both to the scholarly and pedagogic interests of the faculty, and helps students to firmly practice a range of analytic and interpretive skills that are important in the study of various college courses across the curricula. More specifically, our programmatic approach allows us to achieve the following:

- acquaint students with the disciplinary concerns that contribute to the knowledge in the humanities;
- strengthen students' developing skills in critical thinking, problem-solving and textual interpretation;
- inculcate habits of analyzing texts and topics within a cultural, social or intellectual context; and
- familiarize students with diverse cultures and world views.

Structurally, the Humanities Enrichment Program uses a team-teaching, linked course paradigm. We link two courses from different disciplines, and faculty from each discipline teaches the linked course as a unified Humanities course within an interdisciplinary framework. These are some of the links we offer: English composition 1 & 2[1] with a History, Humanities or a Literature course, or link a History course with a Literature course, each of which covers a common time period.

The courses are neither Honors courses nor limited to students in the Humanities curricula; they are open to students across the curricula. The only requirement we have is that they get above average reading placement scores, or receive a grade B or above in their college composition course.

[1] English composition 2 is a library research and writing course

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The two faculty members closely collaborate in the selection of materials, pedagogic techniques, assignment design and evaluation. Students study a theme or a topic by reading primary texts; often, selected texts are from across disciplines -history, literature, art or philosophy- and across cultures – western and non-western. To help facilitate analysis and interpretation of the textual themes, students are provided with thick descriptions of the cultural, historical and intellectual contexts. Each faculty member shares instructional time equally; often, when one person is lecturing, the other one listens, raises pertinent questions for clarification or discussion, participates in class discussion, and helps oversee small-group discussions, all as a way of modeling academic thinking.

There are several measurable outcomes of the above arrangement: students clearly perceive the need for synthesizing information from multiple sources provided via primary texts, lectures and secondary sources; they learn how to identify the socio-cultural forces and the historical contingencies that effect the shaping of a particular institution, action or event; finally, they grasp the distinct intellectual pursuits of different disciplines even as they integrate the methods and findings of each discipline to study and interpret a text. As my colleague and fellow advocate of interdisciplinary instruction puts it:

> The interdisciplinary setting, featuring two professors contributing their specific expertise to the study of an individual text or subject area, emphasizes by its very nature the need to think on an inter-textual level. Students and professors alike benefit from this collaboration of experts whose contribution to the study of text or subject area provide a unique learning experience not available to students on a routine basis anywhere else—even in the traditional [survey] course where too often professors are restricted in what they can do with their selections because of time constraints that automatically come with the course's understandable focus on the number and range of texts, rather than on the historical analysis of only a few. (Dugan, 2002)

But that is our version of the program, and we are in favor of it. There are also several general objections, including those raised at our own institution, towards interdisciplinary instruction in college courses. One of the reservations against it is the belief that it fails to firmly ground students in the disciplinary ways of thinking. We believe that in the first and second year college courses, students in general education courses need to strengthen their critical thinking and academic discourse skills more than they need to acquire in-depth disciplinary knowledge; therefore, interdisciplinary curriculum serves these needs while also indirectly provides insights into disciplinary methods and concepts.

A corollary to the above criticism is that for lack of faculty expertise and training in multiple disciplines, interdisciplinary pedagogy might easily dissolve into a technique where texts or interpretations are presented as fixed truths without the necessary tools to analyze or evaluate the intellectual processes that are used to derive these truths. Our interdisciplinary faculty team, linked-course paradigm, and integration of cross-

disciplinary concerns in the analysis and interpretation of primary texts eliminate helps eliminate such a pitfall.

Nonetheless, it always helps, for one's own clarity, to define one's pedagogy and educational philosophy.

I will begin with definitions of terms that are crucial to the distinctions we make between disciplinarity and interdisciplinary. After all, these formal or informal conceptions guide us in making pedagogic decisions every step of the way.

In my view, disciplinary boundaries in the humanities are set when an interpretive framework is established within which lay a set of common methods and intellectual concerns. In addition, a discipline is marked by the ideological perspectives- often more than one- its practitioners adopt in framing the questions, and in the sources of authority they invoke to support their interpretation. Finally, a discipline may also be defined by what aspects of human condition its practitioners choose to study, what aspects they place outside of their purview, and what questions and methods they choose to debate and discuss internally. Teaching an introductory course in a discipline, then amounts to doing a selective study of history, art or philosophy of a culture as dictated by its methodological and intellectual concerns. The select text or artifact, if any, is studied exclusively from the disciplinary concerns and, often, the text may become an artifact of a single or oppositional narrative/s to the exclusion of multiple equally valid narratives. Disciplinary way of studying, often, is theory bound and dwells in the realm of abstract and knowledge is transmitted from a source of authority to a receptive or an oppositional reader.

How would an interdisciplinary framework differ from the disciplinary way of teaching a humanities subject?

Interdisciplinary study, when well framed, could very well be based on the premise that a sound textual interpretation is feasible when multiple disciplinary methods and their conclusions are co-opted in the interpretative process. Underlying the premise is the assumption that basic methods in multiple disciplines are mutually intelligible to those who pursue humanities and such knowledge is sufficient to gain insights into the text. Similar to the disciplinary approach, interdisciplinary framework also approaches a select text as a cultural artifact; the difference lies in the fact that the reader, instead of approaching the text from a disciplinary framework, say, as a historical, philosophical or an aesthetic study of a cultural event or phenomenon, will now study a text of its multiple facets. The text is viewed as a stage wherein multiple narratives are enacted with equal voice and place. Raymond Williams explains it best when he writes, "the study of culture, begins with the discovery of [a culture's] general patterns of conduct or value systems . . . . .[These are patterns that] will not be apparent in the art, production, trading, politics, the raising of families, treated as separate activities, but through studying a general organization" of all of these in a specific text (P. 666). By virtue of viewing the textual culture in an integrated fashion, the reader is able to critically grasp the nature and

function of power structures, societal tensions as well as the problematics. For example, texts studied within an interdisciplinary framework may be read and interpreted as

- operative spaces of a culture's living traditions and it's tensions,
- reflections of universal or culture specific values and/ or,
- exemplifications of the forces that contribute to the break or conflict in a tradition or value. (Raymond Williams 19**)

Within a general education curricular context, textual study within an interdisciplinary framework will involve an empirical process of data collection and analysis to explain causality or contingency. Interpretation will revolve around identification of the socio-cultural foundations of the multiple traditions and power structures and determination of the causes for the continuation or breakdowns of power. Invariably, in the interpretive process, intertextuality and interdisciplinarity become the mainstays. Thus, in the study of this cultural dialectic, the text becomes an artifact of multiple narratives embedded in competing value systems; the interpretive process vests as much authority in the reader in making judgments as it does in the writer, enabling the reader to assume multiple interpretive stances without the constriction of an either/or stance.

The pedagogic value of interdisciplinary approach to the general education students is that they understand the need for and means of critical thinking; they perceive the value of analyzing social and cultural interactions from multiple equally valid stances. In the process, the pedagogic goal of moving students away from the entrenched notion that voices of authority are not to be interrogated but to be accepted becomes not so daunting a task. Within the interdisciplinary framework, students get enough information to both understand the conventional wisdom and critical viewpoints as well as to evaluate them from a historical and problematic perspective. They come to grasp the idea that textual interpretation is a socio-cultural act that is subject to argument and revision, which is a necessary perspective and a strategy in a global and diverse society.

How does one translate these ideas into pedagogic practices?

- a text that would serve as a common source of data for several disciplines in the humanities;
- a theme or topic that is the focal point of study wherein multiple disciplinary concerns or conclusions converge in a congruous fashion to help bring out the text's sociocultural and /or ideological foundations at a given time in history;
- sufficient knowledge of multiple disciplinary aspects that would help situate the text in its historical, cultural, or intellectual context;
- instructional practices and assignments, which require students to consider multiple disciplinary methods and findings in framing their analysis and interpretation.

In the subsequent pages of this paper, I provide an illustration of how I incorporated the tenets I discussed above The main text under study is the Hindu epic Ramayana; often, I teach this in conjunction with the Greek epic Iliad. I will focus more on Ramayana and touch upon the Greek text as needed. I have taught this in several HEP links as well as in an unlinked World Literature course.

The sequence of instruction

To first get acquainted with the story of the epic, students read an abridged version of the story. A good version that I found was written by Robert Goldman and included in the text, Columbia Curricular Project on South Asian Literatures. Any number of Internet sites or prose versions of Ramayana, such as R.K. Narayan's would work as well. Students read the story and record their questions and comments in their journals and bring them up during the class discussion.

I show students clips from a commercial movie and send comic books around the class. These help make the characters and their environment tangible in students' imagination.

Before having students plunge into the textual analysis, I provide them with historical and intellectual backgrounds.

A. Historical Background:
Initially, the unit begins with the study of the ancient period in the Hindu and Greek cultures when the heroic epics were setting the social and cultural norms. Normally, my historian colleague explains the historical conditions of the age in which the epics were composed and the societal goals and functions the epics served for its contemporary audience well as for later generations. Taking the lead from my historian partner, I will proceed to teach the texts. In the case of Ramayana, I often have to supply the historical information that fits into the analytical framework that has been set by my colleague.

A chapter titled, "**The Impact of Aryan culture**" from **Romila Thapar's *History of India,* *Vol.1***, provides the needed historical background on the territorial expansion of the Aryan kings into the bordering tribal groups. Students are assigned to read the chapter. I ask students to trace how the territorial expansion of the Aryan dynasties of the Ganges plain of the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C mirrors the trail blazed by the legendary king Rama. I also ask students to examine how the Aryan rulers seemed to use Rama's moral victory of the epic as the foundation for the subsequent claims of the political and cultural supremacy of the *Aryans* and *Arya dharma* over the non-aryan tribes and kingdoms of India.

B. History of textual criticism of Ramayana

In addition to the coverage of historical setting of the text, I also present the history of the critical traditions in which the text has been subjected to analysis. Knowledge of

the critical studies is important in the case of *Ramayana* for its canonical status and powerful impact on the Hindu society, including current times.

Briefly, the classical approach to the treatment of themes in Ramayana has been to look at it as a canonical text that exposes the great traditions of Indian culture and social customs; the central characters, **Rama** and **Sita**, or idolized as the ideal role models of men and women for many generations.

Needless to say, there is an abundance of scholarship on the texts literary merits, which is brought to students' attention as well.

Scholars of other cultures have used it as a sourcebook of Indian world-views and its moral and social consciousness.

More recently, in the twentieth century a variety of approaches have been employed: Classicists reinforce the traditional interpretation of Ramayana as a codebook of righteous conduct for men and women. For example, a version entitled *Ramayana Kalpa Vriksham* (The tree of eternal value) typifies that view. Marxist and feminist critics offer new historical or cultural studies analysis, or alternative versions of Ramayana in fictional and dramatic formats. Two such prominent works are ***Sita Josyam*** (Sita's prophecy) by **Narla Venkateswara Rao** and ***Ramayana Visha Vriksam*** (The tree of poisonous values) by **Muppala Ranganayakamma.** A popular counter-cultural version of Ramayana exists in **Tamilnadu** originated and popularized by political reformist leader **Ramaswami Nayakar.** He approaches the text as a saga of racial conflict between the **Aryans** in the person of **Rama** and the **Dravidian** inhabitants of the South in the person of **Ravana.** These are only a few of the many forms and expressions the story of the epic takes.

C. The philosophical concepts embedded in the text

One cannot teach the epic Ramayana, without familiarizing students with the many levels of *dharma*(righteous conduct) that are incorporated into the personalities of various characters and the many philosophical dilemmas it brings into the fore. Here my goal is to make it obvious for students to see how the text of *Ramayana* institutionalizes *dharmic* codes of the scriptures and the laws in the minds and hearts of its readers. They will see how the text becomes a canon of the society's ethics and morals for people to emulate. I use select creation hymns from the *Rig Veda*, and give a lecture with accompanying notes on the various levels of dharma - spiritual, social, and familial-discussed in the *Upanishads* and the *dharma Sutras*.

I base my lecture notes on the book *Sources of Indian Tradition, Vol.1* edited by professor Embree.

The above activities can be done in two to three class hours.

D. Close reading and textual analysis

The next step is to help students establish an intellectual connection between the cultural and political context of the text's composition and the contents of the epic narrative through a close reading and analysis of the text.

It is time to see how the background information combined with modeling of textual analysis and interpretive skills make the opaque text and its themes transparent to the novice student.

The beginning point for this line of reading and analysis is to discuss the implications of the texts attributive terms itihaasa, *and aadi kaavya*, which in Sanskrit are the words for history and first/original poem respectively. [See appendix]

So, I begin by posing the question, why did the Ancient Indians call their epic an *Itihasa*? Students are asked to keep the question in mind as they study the text and comeback to it when they analyze the themes.

I generally choose excerpts from Book 2 or 3 of Valmiki *Ramayana* as the text for analysis. Students are introduced to the several layers of interpretation through my modeling of reading and analysis. They are directed to observe the role Valmiki, the poet, plays in his portrayal of the setting, the characters, and the theme. Concepts such as the use of narrative voice, language and poetic imagery are brought to the fore as tools of analysis; students are asked to examine how each of the three elements contributes to the depiction of culture, theme and character development. They are also shown how within the aesthetic framework of the epic narrative, the various episodes enacted and the dialogues exchanged expose the problematic that causes the break in the tradition.

The episode in Book 2 of Ramayana serves well to demonstrate the problematic and its consequences. Acts of subversion on the part of two spurned female characters and consideration of competing *values of righteousness* on the part of the male characters contribute to the break in the tradition. During the course of the analysis, students focus on the origins, causes and the effects of the conflict. The analysis is done through the contextualized examination of relevant characters' decisions, statements, past as well as present actions and descriptors used by the author.

In the model exercise described below, students are given lists of specific stanzas and topics for analysis. The activity calls for close reading, synthesis of information from the context with the information in the text, defining the underlying motives and causes of an action through inference and logical reasoning.

Book 2, sarga 7, Stanzas 10-11

Women and how they use their charm

> Get up, you foolish woman! How Can you lie there when danger is

> threatening you? Don't you realize that a flood of misery is about to overwhelm you?
>
> "Your beautiful face has lost its charm. You boast of the power of your beauty, but it has proved to be as fleeting as a river's current in the hot season."

I ask students to reflect upon the implications of the phrase, " You boast of the power of your beauty." I give them questions given below to ponder upon:

> What is the purpose of such strong language attributed to the maid *Manthara?*
>
> Does it mean that women strongly felt that they had to use their charm as a tool to attain power and status? Why would they have to do it?
>
> What social norms and cultural values of the Vedic tradition are possibly impinged upon when the poet makes *Manthara*, the servant woman, the instigator of *Kaikeyi*, the princess queen's, vileness?
>
> What can we infer from the passage about women and their consciousness in the ancient Aryan society?

When presented in isolation or without the thick description of the multiple dimensions of the cultural context, these lines may not mean more than the vile conduct of selfish women, but when situated within the set cultural and the ethical norms, the theme of subversion or human fallibility and the multiple strands of tradition that feed into it become transparent.

Once plausible answers are derived, students are asked to continue the thread of analysis and note taking until a thematic interpretation emerges. In addition to the above question and answer process, students are asked to make a list of descriptive epithets and epic similes and examine their interpretive meanings until a composite view of the theme or character emerges.

This close reading and analytical exercise takes one class period. Now students receive their study questions and essay assignments to work at their own pace.

Below you will find other pairs of primary texts or units of study that I have used in my humanities courses:

The Book of Job & Bhagavad Gita
Focus: The ancient Hebrew and Hindu worldviews on their relationship to God and obligations of moral conduct. What lessons do they learn about their duty towards God?

Excerpts from classical Greek and Hindu texts

Focus: Examination of the origins, nature and spread of Hindu and Greek philosophical traditions within their historical contexts

Plutarch's lives of Romans & Shakespeare's *Julius Ceasar*
Focus: Shakespeare's adherence to historical depictions and creative development of characters and theme

Kate Chopin's Awakening & Camu's philosophical essay, "Absurdity and Suicide'
Focus: Existential angst, ennui, the quest for authenticity, and the impulse for suicide

Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" & Mahatma Gandhi's biography
Focus: The nature and power of non-violent resistance

What are the broader implications of our programmatic approach to the teaching of humanities?

In my view, students get to experience humanities learning in a more texturized fashion than those who take classes in an unlinked format. They understand the interconnected nature of real-world problems and perceive how various cultural institutions weave their way into lived experiences. They understand the motivations and inevitable compulsions behind the enterprise of institutionalizing cultural values, and the forces that emerge from within and without to cause the opposition or subversion of the same.

There seems to be urgency to our students' understanding of the nature of interdisicplinarity now than ever before due to our culturally diverse but globally interconnected world. If anything, our approach should make the student to be self-consciously aware of the need to have interconnected knowledge to understand and solve real world problems. They will know where to look for answers and how to analyze and evaluate information.

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Appendix - Sample study questions and assignments

Study questions - *Ramayana*

Important terms

adi kavya	adi kavi	itihaasa	purana	dharma	yagna
rishi	sura	asura	deva	rakshasa	manava
aryan	dravidian				

Name derivations: In the course of your reading you will come across multiple names being used to refer to the same character. This is a technique used to fit the meter, enhance the descriptive or emotive power, or to evoke thematic issues. It helps to know the technique to avoid confusion and enhance readability. Take careful notes when the examples are explained in class.

Sita – Janaki: daughter of king Janaka
Maithili:

Rama - Raghava: descendant of Raghu dynasty
Daasarathi:
Kausaleya:

Discussion Questions

1. As you read the poem, jot down the adjectives used to describe the following characters: Dasaratha, kaikeyi, Manthara, Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita. Then examine how they help understand the poet's or the Hindu culture's value system, which they call *dharma*.

2. Why does Dasaratha plan Rama's coronation in the absence of his two younger brothers? Why does he inform the citizenry know of it before his wives and other children know about it?

3. How does the nurse Manthar*a* change Bharata's mother Kaikeyi;s attitude? Are her fears well founded? Are their actions defensible? Explain why or why not? Use the evidence from the text to defend your opinion.

4. Dasaratha is caught in a bind (dharmic conflict, or *dharma sandeha*) when he had to keep his honor-bound promise to his wife and at the same time fulfill the mandate of his duty as a monarch- coronate Rama as prince regent. How do his past and his character lead to the problems faced by him? How does Valmiki's portrayal of Dasaratha affect your judgment of his character and conduct?

5. Rama believes that his *dharma* is to protect his father's honor by obeying his stepmother's orders. Lakshmana, on the other hand, thinks that Rama's true dharma lies in fighting for what is rightfully his. Who do you think is right? Could you characterize one as the right and the other wrong judgment? Defend your point of view. Examine the reasoning each one uses to form your view and response.

6. Women are portrayed as playing an active role in triggering political disasters or conflicts. For instance, Kaikeyi's demand, Surpanakha's misadventure with Rama, and Sita's desire for the golden deer and her crossing the line drawn by her brother-in-law Lakshmana are such cases. What is your reaction to it? Could you trace other reasons described where women are not instrumental in creating the conflicts? Is there a difference in the way the female and the other actions are treated? Are some causes depicted more prominently than others? How does the poet Valmiki reconcile [***possible essay question***]

7. Sita successfully engages in a debate with Rama over the duty of a wife towards her husband. Examine that part in the text and make a character-analysis of Sita as a woman, hero's wife and a learned person. What in her argument comes out as the primary concern for wanting to accompany her husband? What was/were her secondary concerns? What does her reasoning reveal of the feminine consciousness in the world of *Ramayana?* [***Possible essay question***]

8. In Hindu society, Rama and Sita are the all time role models of ideal conduct as husband and wife, respectively. Do you see it the same way? Explain why or why not?

Ramayana – close reading and textual analysis (In-class guided exercise)

Read the specified passages in the right column and comment on the contents with reference to the specified topic in the left column.

Book 2: Sarga 7

Nature of celebration	Stanzas 2-3 & 4-5
Women and their charm	Stanza 11
Rewarding the underlings	Stanzas 27, 29 & 31(p. 520)
Sarga 8	
Royal women and their power politics	Stanzas 3, 4, 5
Virtues of Rama	Stanzas 7-10

Rules of engagement in deciding the crown prince	Stanzas 13-16
Guiding motivations and principles of family politics	Stanzas 20-27

An example of intertextual study and interpretations using variations of the UR Text (In-class guided exercise)

1. Compare and contrast *Sargas* 16 and 17 in *Valmiki Ramayana* and verses 20.2848 on P.538 through 90.2927 on P. 540 in *Kampan Ramayana.*

Consider the following issues for your analysis.
Compare the depictions of the character of Surpanakha in both texts. Analyze how each poet treats *Surpanakha* in terms of her sexuality, socio-cultural identity, and individuality. Describe how the two poets view the character in her role as a woman of her culture. Notice that both poets describe her as an evil woman, but the portraits that emerge in each text reveal how each one viewed the values and worldview of a woman in the *Dravidian* society.

2. Interpret the last verse in *Kampan's* text?

Note: *In your analysis, pay close attention to the conversations and debates between the two brothers and Surpanakha who was spurned by them.*

Essay topics for comparative analysis of *Iliad* and *Ramayana*

1. Consider the two epics you studied from Greece and India for their treatment of male heroes and their societal and familial roles. How are they similar and different? What does the portrayal of these male characters and their worlds reveal about the worldviews of these epic cultures?

2. Draw a portrait of the epic hero doing a close analysis of at least two texts. Describe the interplay between their sense of moral, social, and familial obligations. How do they resolve conflicts that arise in the process of determining their priorities? What does it take to be called a hero in these worlds? (*You can compare Hector and Rama to do this!)*

3. In both epics there are episodes where close companions try to persuade central characters to change their minds and do the right thing. Here are a few cases:

a. Manthara - kaikeyi
b. Kaikeyi - Dasaratha
c. Lakshmana – Rama
d. Sita – Rama
e. Achilleus – Nestor, Ajax, Phonix, Odysseus
f. Hektor – Andromache
g. Patroklus – Achilleus

Examine these episodes to draw a picture of diverse strategies – logical, emotional appeal, higher knowledge, age, duty, and psychological pressure, etc.- used in the act of

persuasion. Discuss the similarities and the differences you see, if any, between the tactics used by males and females in general.

4. War occupies center-stage in both epics. While the immediate reason seems to be the unwomanly conduct of a woman, there seem to be many underlying reasons when the epics are treated as artistic renderings of the events and values of their culture and society. Discuss what they might be by gleaning evidence from the text and the secondary readings you were provided on the authorship, and the political and cultural atmosphere of the times when they were composed.

5. Regardless of how the bards portray women's characters, the voice of the women becomes obvious when the text is subjected to a cultural studies analysis. Using that framework, write an essay on the women of Iliad and Ramayana. You may consider the following questions to frame your response.

- What are Women's connections with the world's affairs?
- What role do they play in the political system?
- Do they have a role in the decision-making processes?
- How does their predicament or status determine their behavior, feelings and opinions?
- What are the women in these stories most concerned about (*about themselves, their security and fulfillment, their family, their culture's survival, etc.)?*
- What are their loyalties fixed upon?
- How do they determine their loyalty? Are the sources of their suffering or happiness different from those of the male heroes?
- What elements cause their tragic destinies *(their character flaws or the forces in the environment)* and the resulting events?

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